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## HAMMERING HIS WAY INTO ART

BY W. FRANK PURDY



FROM the earliest days the hammer or martel has been the chief instrument with which the true hand-worker in the precious metals has shaped his products—and his destiny. Modern American silversmiths in reviving the hand-made wares have

gone back to this old-time principle—but, as is always the case with the modern worker, in his enthusiasm and greed for progress and perfection, he has carried this new art of hammered silver, as it must be recognized, much further than the original workers, in their most triumphant successes, were ever able to go.

This present-day progress has been largely possible for the worker in the precious metals because of the very practical assistance of his brother, shall we say, craftsman—the blacksmith. Through the development to a greater or more elaborate degree of the secondary accessory to the hammer in the shape of the anvil and “snarling-iron,” the modern forger in steel and iron must have due credit for making possible the present advance in hammered silver by his fellow-worker in the silverware shop. Made in an infinite variety of forms, this shaping-iron has been of inestimable value in increasing the possibilities for expression on the part of the American craftsman in the hand-wrought metals.

Some one or two of our modern American manufacturers have availed themselves of these conveniences to so remarkable a degree, in fact, that

we have succeeded in creating a variety of form and ornamentation, by purely hand methods, that is greatly in excess of anything turned out by the original masters of the art. While it is undeniably true that the early artist-artisans created wonderful individual examples, pieces properly honored, today, with museum rights, yet such pieces which were really worthy of immortality might almost now be counted on one's

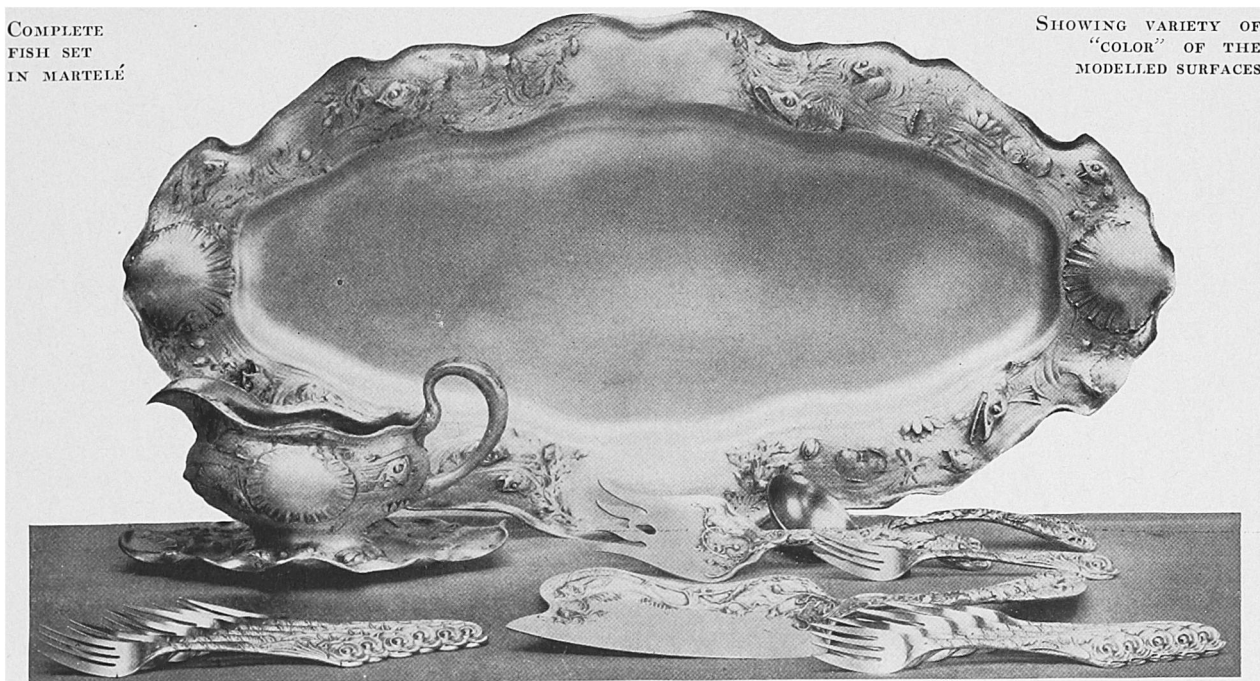
fingers as the product of a single worker, while the artistic-scientific insight and cooperation of our correlated metal workers of to-day has doubled, well nigh quadrupled, both the individual and collective output of this period. All this achievement has been attained, moreover, without the slightest sacrifice of intrinsic beauty, every article produced retaining in all of its charm that indefinite atmosphere which comes only with hand craftsmanship.

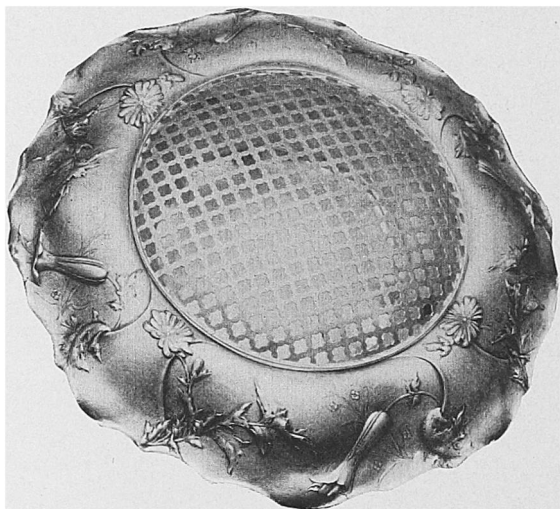
But just what do we mean by this hammered, hand-wrought silver—known in the shops, to-day, as Martelé? And is it truly made, as we are told, only by a man with his hammer and his anvil, and no precomposed design, or pattern, or mold, or guide of any kind other than his own creative genius? And how?



COMPLETE  
FISH SET  
IN MARTELÉ

SHOWING VARIETY OF  
“COLOR” OF THE  
MODELLED SURFACES

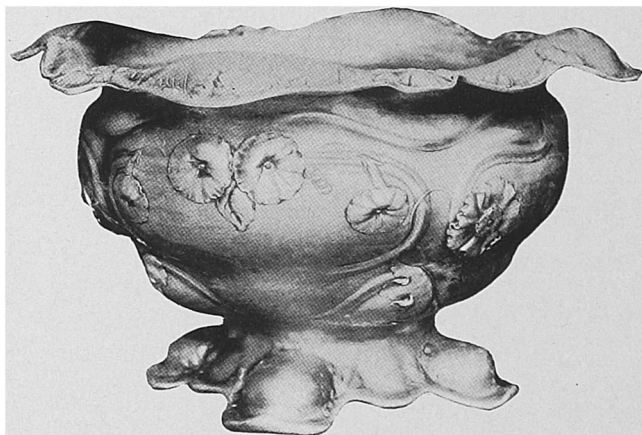




FIELD FLOWERS AND FOLIAGE ARE APPROPRIATELY INCLUDED IN THE DESIGN OF THIS JARDINIÈRE

Martelé silver, in the strictest sense of the term, means, as has been implied, that the finished silver product—whatever it may be, whether bowl, or urn, or platter, or pitcher—has been created solely by skilful blows of a properly directed hammer on a sheet of the purest silver. With a craving to create that refuses to be suppressed, this remarkable silver craftsman of ours, on some happy, sunny morning, picks out his piece of metal—in this case very nearly pure silver in quality, assaying 950 one thousandths fine, instead of the commoner, harder grade of sterling, and corresponding in size to the object he desires to make—and armed only with his pounding-irons, and such inspiration as his artistic mind may be keyed to, he rests the favored sheet on the shaping-anvil and enthusiastically sets to work. He really goes about it in much the same way as a sculptor plays with his own plastic medium, feeling out first the general form, then—ever so lovingly, gently, patiently—the irresistible ornamentation, and finally the finished artistic whole.

At first, the hammer and irons used are rather simple, and the molder's thought equally so, but as form develops and a real pattern starts to grow, for the more delicate traceries which are then in order the snarling-iron gets in its good work by way of a vibratory action. Instead of, as in the beginning, the artist pounding directly on the silver slung over an anvil of the necessary size, an indirect blow, as it were, struck on the opposite end of the shaping-iron itself—in this case a long, slender, L-shaped tendril, with a tiny ball on its turned-up tip—plays with a tripping, rhythmic singing motion into the pliable, yielding silver, giving just the necessary indentations for the final pattern.



PUNCH BOWL: POPPY AND MORNING GLORY MOTIF, SHOWING THE EVOLUTION FROM BUD TO FULL BLOOM

The graceful, poignantly beautiful traceries now flow forth almost like a thing that is alive. And, in a measure, it is, too, for this man with the hammer, and the iron, and the crude worker's apron—from our narrow, academic and worldly point of view as yet a genius quite unrecognized—pours his living desire for beauty directly from his own body right into the heart of the warming metal in his hands, giving it soul, as well as a form that must and will live on. The inimitable pearly sheen of the metal, the soft yet delicately clear lines of both form and ornamentation, coupled with the fact that not even the artist himself can set his temperament exactly to copy or reproduce any one piece which he has previously created, give this uniquely romantic ware an intrinsic value all its own.

And this is your Martelé silver! And he who has once seen and touched a piece becomes a better human being for the contact.

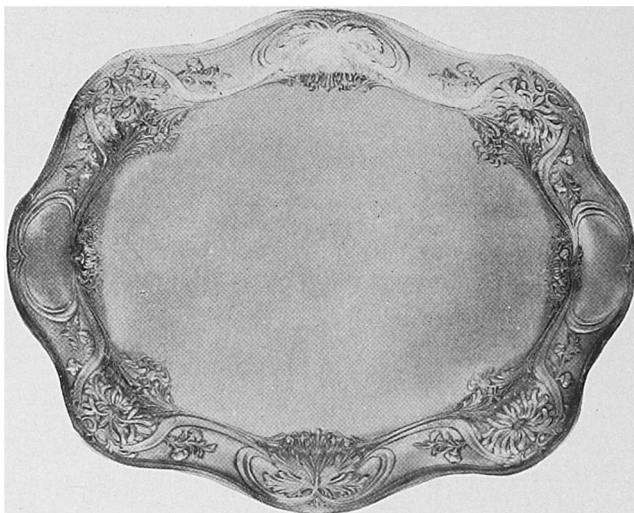
The pieces here illustrated can not show on the flat surface of the coated paper the art really concealed in their texture and their depths. The fish set, for example, shown, is a conspicuous example of the variety of surface modelling, which is technically known as the "color" thereof.

After the metal has been shaped into the required form, the development of the design is carried forward in a method almost musical.

The flowing water, the flora of the sea, and finally, the living objects depicted, come forth in a most natural and decorative manner.

Again, in the case of the single tray shown the subtle, almost sub-surface decoration must be seen in the original metal to be truly appreciated.

A more recent example is the jardinière shown. Appropriate to its object, field flowers and foliage have entered



DELICACY OF DETAIL IS PARTICULARLY NOTICEABLE IN THIS TRAY IN MARTELÉ

into the decorative scheme. Again, the charming possibilities of flexibility of modelling by this method is shown in this example. Each leaf, twig, and flower has again its true decorative value, as well as its comparative natural value, leaf, tendril, and petal mingling in loving confusion.

In the punch bowl, the motif is that of the poppy and morning-glory. From the opening bud through the full blown flower, to the moment of the dropping head, the evolution of the flower is shown.

Bolder in composition than the other examples shown, it is equally harmonious in composition, again showing the utter and complete flexibility of

this method of decoration, making the decoration itself a complete and harmonious development of the actual form on which it is imposed.

While such silver as this is and can be created for all the practical purposes to which household silver is ordinarily put, its artistic value favors, perhaps, a more purely ornamental use. Great vases, urns, and loving-cups that are treasured for an achievement, or to hold a memory clear, are more nearly worthy of that little piece of his life which the silver artist has pounded into the metal giving something of his very self with every blow—and christened Martelé.

## A PAPER FAVOR AND FURNISHING SHOP

BY LEE MCCRAE

A BRAND new business for women with skilled fingers, taste and originality is the "Paper Favor and Furnishing Shop." The first and only one of its kind was recently opened in Los Angeles and is meeting instant approval.

Everything within the fadeless fairyland save the heavy tables and rugs is made of paper. Even tabourets, tea-carts, piano lamps, fern boxes, baskets, bird cages, stands and lighting globes are of it, yet as substantial as though constructed of reeds.

"It is the new paperie craft that I learned under the manufacturers of fancy paper materials," explained the originator and proprietor of the attractive shop. "You see these articles of furniture, as well as the vases, candlesticks and shades, wall racks, and such smaller articles, are formed of paper ropes, and when finished are shelacked or metalized to resemble copper or silver or oxidized metal. The ropes are more flexible than reeds and so lend themselves more readily to artistic shapes; they have greater endurance—though that seems hard to believe—are lighter, absolutely unbreakable, and never roughen up with usage."

Evidently another beautiful material is supplied by this craft to our home-furnishers and one that is capable of wider scope.

Home-makers will also grasp the idea shown in the decorations of suspended baskets which turn old-fashioned fixtures into the indirect lights that

are so artistic and restful to the eyes. There were common glaring globes hanging from the ceiling of this room before the paper shop was established, but now beneath each is the oxidized silver (?) bowl with its pink transparencies and showers of blossoms falling like miniature snow-storms of pink flakes.

Of course there are flowers here, fadeless, unwithering flowers, and their profusion, perfection and exquisite arrangement show the artistic originality of this woman-decorator.

Tables, large and small, of different designs and motifs and color schemes are complete in all their details. These are for the inspection of prospective hostesses who may order any part or the whole, even to the china and embroidered linen carrying out the motif.

This up-to-date shop takes complete charge of house decorations for all sorts of functions, halls and churches for all occasions, floats for flower parades, and designs costumes

for fancy balls and school plays—all of paper so beautifully fashioned as to defy criticism.

The young woman who has opened this new business is skilled in paper craft and she has wisely located in the only woman's commercial building in the country, the Brack Shops of Los Angeles. But other women of skill and artistic ability might well follow her idea in other cities, for the Paperie Craft is going to be future demand of our house-furnishers.



LANDRUM PAPER FAVOR SHOP